

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1436

As Reported by House Committee On:
State Government Operations & Accountability

Title: An act relating to public funding of campaigns for local offices.

Brief Description: Allowing public funding of local office campaigns.

Sponsors: Representatives McDermott, Clibborn, Dickerson, Santos, Moeller, Simpson and McIntire.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government Operations & Accountability: 1/10/06, 1/17/06 [DP].

<p>Brief Summary of Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allows the use of public funds for campaigns for local office.
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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ACCOUNTABILITY

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by Representatives Haigh, Chair; Green, Vice Chair; Hunt, McDermott and Miloscia.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by Representatives Nixon, Ranking Minority Member; Clements, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Schindler and Sump.

Staff: Stephanie Toby (786-7106).

Background:

In November of 1992, Washington voters approved Initiative 134 (I-134), which imposed limitations on campaign contributions. Initiative 134 prohibited the use of public funds for financing political campaigns for state or local office.

The Public Disclosure Commission (Commission) is charged with enforcing the campaign finance provisions of I-134. The Commission judges enforcement cases brought before them for hearing and possible imposition of penalty.

Summary of Bill:

The prohibition against the use of public funds to finance campaigns for local office is removed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This bill will increase access and participation in local campaigns and reduce reliance on special interests. It will level the playing field for persons seeking to run in local elections, reduce time spent fund-raising and thus allow a candidate more time with the public, and will reduce actual or apparent conflicts of interest. The city of Seattle had a program for 15 years that allowed persons campaigning for local office to use public funds until Initiative 134 passed in 1992. Seattle's program resulted in more women and minorities being elected to city council. Seattle's program was an option program for both local government and the candidates, and not a mandated program. This bill places the decision on a local matter in local hands.

Testimony Against: This bill could be construed to undermine restrictions on the use of public facilities. There needs to be set parameters for control. The previous concerns would go away if language was added to this bill that addresses the concerns. Local government dollars are precious and this bill will introduce competition for those dollars. The local governance should let their citizens vote on the dollar amount of public funds to allow for use in local campaigns.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative McDermott, prime sponsor; John King, Washington Public Campaigns; Chris Chamberlin, League of Women Voters of Washington; and David Foster and Wayne Barnett, City of Seattle.

(Opposed) Paul Telford.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.